



State Representative

33rd District

Shay Schual-Berke



Health Care Resource Guide

August 2007

Dear Friends,

As a retired doctor, health care has always been one of my top legislative priorities. To me, this issue isn't just about helping children, families and seniors stay healthy, it's also about helping us all prevent disease, save money and enjoy a better quality of life.

The 2007 legislative session was a particularly exciting year for our state's health care system. And though we're making solid progress at the state level, change at the federal level is essential to support our efforts. It is my hope that until a federal solution is found, the work we do in Olympia will help every family and business in our community find the quality care they need at a cost they can afford.

Inside you'll find information on new and upcoming programs that will help you pay for your prescription medicine, find affordable health insurance for your children, and much more. I hope you find this guide to be a helpful resource.

While health care has been one of my top priorities as a retired doctor, working hard for the residents of the 33rd district is my top priority as a legislator. My office works year-round to provide services to our community, respond to questions and be a sounding board for your ideas. I have a district office right here in Des Moines and I encourage you to give us a call or drop by if there's anything we can do for you.

Warmly,

Representative Shay Schual-Berke, M.D.

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- Capital Budget (*Vice-Chair*)
- Health Care & Wellness
- Appropriations

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<http://www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/schual-berke>



What are lawmakers doing to help me find health care?

More than you might think

Every year, state agencies and lawmakers work hard to find ways to keep our communities healthy and help families find quality, affordable health care. This guide contains information about several new and existing programs that you should know about. If you have questions about any of this information, feel free to call my office in Des Moines at (206) 824-5097.

New programs and services coming soon

Healthy communities start with a healthy public health system

The United Health Foundation ranks Washington 44th in the nation for public health spending. Our state lost the only dedicated funding source for public health services in 1999 when

"Many of us rarely think about public health because we take for granted our ability to get a flu vaccine or have clean drinking water. But if an outbreak of avian flu were to happen tomorrow, or if the 'Big One' were to strike Puget Sound next month, many of our communities are woefully unprepared because of lack of funding."

– Rep. Schual-Berke

needed for our state and local governments to prevent disease outbreaks such as SARS or West Nile virus, respond to disasters such as earthquakes, educate the public on how to prevent the spread of diseases such as AIDS and the flu, and more. We

voters approved I-695 and the result has been wide funding disparities on a county-by-county basis. Case in point - Wahkiakum County spends \$36 per capita while Grant County spends only \$2 per capita.

A strong public health system is

know that viruses such as West Nile don't stay within county limits and the destruction of an earthquake doesn't end at the county line.

I had the honor of chairing the Joint Select Committee on Public Health Financing which spent two years examining how to address this need. This session, we passed HB 1825 to help provide a stable funding source for public health services and to make sure we're seeing real results for our investments. The bill outlines several performance and accountability measures to help the state track health outcomes such as increased immunization rates and creation of disease response systems. I'll continue to work on this issue in the coming session to make sure all our communities have the right resources and tools to keep our families safe.

For more information...

To learn about the Legislature's work on this issue, visit www.leg.wa.gov/Joint/Committees/PHF/.

Waging a war against children's asthma

Across the state, childhood asthma costs are estimated at \$127 million a year. In King County, 648 children are hospitalized annually for asthma, at a cost of \$3.5 million. With Medicaid picking up 42 percent of this tab, asthma is truly a public health issue.

That's why this year I championed funding in the state budget to set up a pilot project in King County to provide home visits for kids with asthma. The pilot program will bring trained professionals to the homes of 1,700 children to help them and their families develop the skills they need to manage asthma. These children will learn how to use medication properly, what to do when symptoms worsen and how to identify asthma triggers.

Health Care Resource Guide



I'm hoping this pilot program yields the same impressive results as similar programs across the country. By investing in healthier, asthma-free kids, we can ensure fewer trips to the ER, fewer days of missed school, and an astonishing cost-savings for taxpayers. It's estimated that we can save \$1.70 in health care costs for every \$1 invested in prevention. If we can reduce asthma by 20 percent, we can save as much as \$360 million annually.

For more information...

Visit King County's website for information on asthma prevention programs at www.metrokc.gov/health/asthma/programs or call them at 206-296-4600.

Making sure all our children are covered

Today, 72,500 children in our state don't have health care coverage. There are many reasons that children's health care should be a priority.

- It saves us money. The cost of one emergency room visit = 1 year of health coverage for a child. Investing in regular, preventive care for children saves us millions of dollars in costly ER visits and treatment for diseases such as diabetes.
- It helps children learn and succeed. No matter how excellent our school systems are, if a child goes to school with an earache or is missing class because of asthma, that child will not be able to keep up. We all pay when a child falls behind in school, takes remediation courses, or drops out.
- It helps us all stay healthier. Our public health system is stronger when children are covered. Contagious diseases and outbreaks travel fast in schools and are then brought home. A \$10 immunization shot for a child is a simple, inexpensive way to prevent the rapid spread of diseases in our communities.

That's why we passed legislation to make sure every child in our state will have health coverage by 2010. Our goal is not only to cover more kids, but to improve their health.

Just as importantly, we based the system on a sliding scale so our neediest children have access to free coverage while families with higher incomes have access to more affordable coverage. This means that low-income children whose families have some income can purchase coverage at a reduced rate and families with too much money for state support, but not enough to buy on their own, can purchase a plan directly from the state at full cost.



Rep. Schual-Berke urges lawmakers to support a stronger public health system.

For more information...

Visit <http://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/maa/Eligibility/HealthyKidsNow.html> or call 1-877-KidsNow (1-877-543-7669).

Ending discrimination against those with mental health problems

I've been a long-time advocate of mental health parity in our insurance system. Insurance companies should provide the same quality coverage for mental health services as they do for physical health services. I've met people who couldn't afford the costly treatments needed for their mental health illness and were forced to give up their jobs so they could qualify for public assistance. It was the only way they could find a path to treatment and no family should suffer such a heartbreaking choice.

In 2005, I passed legislation to require mental health parity in health insurance sold to large groups covering more than 50 employees. This was an enormous step towards ending insurance discrimination against those with mental illness.

This year, I successfully passed legislation to make sure that all health insurance plans, even those sold to individuals and small groups, provide parity for mental health. This new law goes into effect January 2008.

For more information...

Visit the Washington Coalition for Insurance Parity at www.paritywa.org. You can also contact **your insurance provider** for details about how your coverage will change.

State Representative Shay Schual-Berke

33rd Legislative District

Handy resources for you and your family

Choosing a long-term care facility

Finding a quality assisted-living facility or adult family home can be a confusing and stressful experience for families. Gone are the days when a family's only option was to shut a loved one away in a cold institution. Many of today's long-term care facilities provide the kind of comfort and care that our loved ones deserve.

But finding the best home means doing your homework. My office has put together a wonderful resource for those looking for a facility including questions to ask when choosing a home, who to contact if there are problems or concerns, and useful websites for more information.

You can contact my Des Moines office at **(206) 824-5097** for a copy of the guide or visit my website at **www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/schual-berke** to download a copy.

Office of the Insurance Commissioner's SHIBA Helpline

Whether you need help finding an affordable insurance plan or prescription medicines, have questions about your current

provider, or want information about preventing insurance fraud and abuse, you can contact the SHIBA Helpline. Visit **www.insurance.wa.gov/consumers/SHIBA_HelpLine** or call **1-800-562-6900**.

New, free Prescription Drug Discount Card

A new Prescription Drug Discount Card is now available to any Washington resident regardless of age or income. This free card allows you to save up to 60% on generic drugs and 20% on brand-name drugs at hundreds of participating pharmacies around the state. You can enroll on-line at **www.rx.wa.gov** or by calling **1-800-913-4146**.

State resources for medical care services

If you're having a difficult time affording health coverage for you and your family, you might qualify for help. Contact the Department of Social and Health Services for information on medical services available. Visit **www1.dshs.wa.gov/basicneeds/#med** or call **1-800-737-0617**.

Online Survey
Health care in
Washington –
what do you think?
Do you have ideas about how
to improve health care in Wash-
ington? Visit my website at
www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/Schual-Berke to com-
plete a brief online survey and
let me know what you think.

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